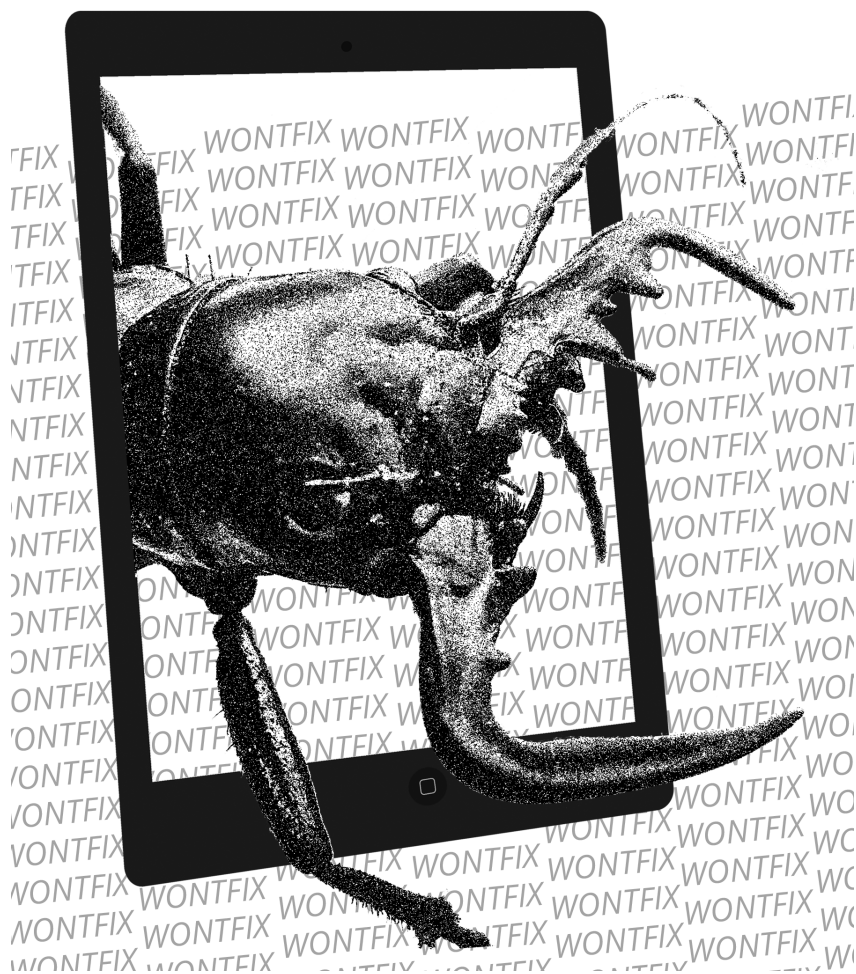


BUG REPORT!

ISSUE 01



The tech industry is broken.

For a while, it mostly went unnoticed. From tech startups to the Frightful Five, venture capital and new markets made the industry willfully blind to the damage inflicted by their products and services. Tech bros dominated workplaces, making offices havens for sexual harassment, assault, and discrimination, as well as just plain old crappy places to work. For a while, most of us bought into the Californian Ideology, that notion—peddled hardest by “thought leaders” and CEOs—that technology is unconditionally good and would mean wealth and opportunity for everyone.

But the tech industry broke itself and the cracks are starting to show. As its hunger for labor grows and as it destroys other jobs through automation, more of us are working in tech for lack of other options. The industry is so big, it’s harder to justify the definition of “tech worker” as solely the well-paid software engineer; it’s now also the fulfillment center worker, the cafeteria staff, the rideshare driver, the independent contractor. Increasingly, we tech workers are women, leftists, immigrants, people of color, queer and trans folks. Many of us came of age during the recession. And we don’t like what we’re seeing.

That’s why workers at Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Salesforce have been saying #TechWontBuildIt. That’s why they demand that their employers end contracts with law enforcement, ICE, and the military. That’s why Amazon warehouse workers in Europe went on strike on Prime Day, sparking boycotts worldwide. That’s why somewhere, a team of devs will go out for beers after work today and confide to each other that they all hate the insane deadlines, what they’re creating, how they’re treated... and they will begin imagining ways to organize.

Bug Report! is about working in tech. The fixes aren’t trivial. Techno-capitalism uses tech and labor to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few, to intensify surveillance and control of all aspects of life, to invent new forms of exploitation, and drive workers into the ground. We refuse to drink the Soylent. Fundamentally, we are all workers, and it is as workers that we share our honest stories and experiences here.

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BEZOS

My desk is a door	Office has one gender neutral bathroom, and there's a dude in it vaping and watching Netflix	Tired of shipping so many sex toys	Libertarian coworkers think warehouse workers need to learn to code if they want more money	I cant take anymore Bezos Balls jokes
Don't really care that much about customers to be honest	I've changed teams every 3 months	Got caught calling the Quiet Room the "Crying Room"	My only friend is Alexa. It's so sad... Alexa, play "Despacito."	Can't get turned on getting findommed by someone who makes \$4.5 million an hour
Ran out of hiding places for my piss bottles in the warehouse	Tired of apologizing to complete strangers for working at Amazon		I'm the only Black person in my building and I'm a custodian	New coworker from SF got a "steal" on a \$2000 studio apartment
Raised the performance bar too high for myself	If I eat another banana, I'm gonna puke	They hired another woman on my floor so I no longer have a private bathroom	Jeff ate my pet iguana	Been on call and haven't slept in days
Libertarian coworkers keep spamming me with political compass quizzes	Coworker from overseas asked why there are so many homeless people and I didn't know how to answer	Alexa fired me	I can bring my dog to work, but not my toddler	Jeff was offended when I rubbed the top of his head for good luck

WAYS TO "WIN" BEZOS BINGO

5 IN A ROW: Congrats! After getting hounded for the hundreth time, you get to take your friends on yet *another* trip to the Go Store!

4 CORNERS: Amazon builds another office building next to yours, so now you get to look out the window every day and see other sad employees!

BLACKOUT: Wowza! Your hometown gets chosen for HQ2!



IMPACT MUST DIE

‘Ding!’ Someone messaged you! Wait, no they didn’t. You pull out your phone only to see the message, “You are now connected on Messenger.” Hey, thanks a lot, Zuck. No one cares.

While there are a number of instances of Facebook acting outright spammy, this is the most egregious one I have noticed. Other annoying “features” include getting notified when a complete stranger posts in a random group you’re both in, or when a friend comments on another stranger’s photo. Facebook shows other people when you have seen their messages: holy pressuring me to respond through shaming!

Why is Facebook so annoying? Sometimes these “features” are fixed after enough employees have complained about them (because who cares about actual user feedback?), but if you’re wondering why hostile design is a core component of Facebook, here’s the breakdown:

This has nothing to do with users, innovation, or market research. It’s actually the result of Facebook’s employee performance review system. At Facebook, your worth as an employee is based on how much IMPACT you create. What is IMPACT, you ask? IMPACT is anything that makes the company more money by getting users to look at more ads. To show that you’re producing more IMPACT, you need to have the data to back it up. So how would one do this? It’s easy! Just follow these simple steps.

1. Pick a graph (average daily users, messages sent per day, time spent on site)
2. Add some bold innovative new feature that spams users
3. Watch that graph go up (just don’t bug them too much to force them off the site!)
4. Rake in that sweet, sweet IMPACT!

More message notifications means more people using Messenger each day, no matter how annoying. You might check your app after being tricked into thinking someone messaged you. You might even send a message to someone complaining about how annoying the feature is. Boom! More people on the app, meaning more time looking at ads, meaning more of those advertiser dollars for the shareholders! Looks like someone is going to get a good review this half! IMPACT, BABY!



While this method of measuring performance makes sense if you're working on some infrastructure team (hey, I made the database reads 0.5% faster on average!), it's a horrible way of designing a website or phone app (hey, I spammed users with notifications and they spent an extra five minutes a day on the site!), creating this spammy, dopamine-exploiting service.

And dopamine is really the name of the game here; even if Facebook's mission is to "connect the world," the mission of the shareholders is to rake in that \$\$\$\$. From Sean Parker, the founding president of Facebook himself: "The thought process was: 'How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?'" All Zuck has to do is imply to developers that their jobs are to make the graphs go up (ACHIEVE IMPACT) and they will fine tune the details themselves (IMPACT ACHIEVED). As long as the graphs go up, you still have a salary in this barely-affordable city.

Recently facebook has conceded some ground here, allowing you to turn off certain notifications and monitor how much time you're wasting on the app. But even if this somehow "fixes" some annoying issues, the ingenious army of IMPACT miners looking to increase their paycheck only care about making those graphs go up. Until that changes, the onslaught of spammy garbage is unfortunately here to stay.

Leaving the Tech Industry: A Conversation Between Friends

When did you decide you wanted to leave and what factored into that decision?

I picked computer science because I was good at it. But I really stuck with it because of the founder of our department, Fred Brooks, he's like this legendary computer project manager, engineer. Probably racist -- I mean, he's old as fuck. But he said computer scientists and software engineers are like tool makers. We're not glamorous, but we create tools to enable people to go beyond what they're capable of, that allow us as a society to go beyond our scope.

When I came to Seattle, it was the first time I saw homelessness at this scale. And I worked in Pioneer Square, so I would bike past the Union Gospel Mission and Lazarus Day Center. I was disgusted at the societal conditions that led people to be there, when I was making \$120k right out of college. So I started getting involved outside my industry, going to hackathons, not only to learn how to code better, but also to help solve the global fishing crisis! There was a hackathon with fish! They served sustainable salmon and shit like that, but then they'd say, "Now make an app so we can solve overfishing!"

Eventually I ended up on this project to solve homelessness.

Oh God, no.

Yeah, I'm gonna get skewered! Anyway, I volunteered at the Salvation Army, and one thing is we don't actually know the capacity of each shelter in this city. You have to call 411 and ask, and the info you get isn't in real time. We thought we could make a system that could track the capacity of each shelter in real time. Under the Obama administration, even homeless people had cell phones. So homeless folks could go into the

shelters and -- badabing badaboom! Homelessness is solved!



As I did more research, I realized no one gives a shit about the capacity of shelters. The fact is there's just not enough housing. There's no amount of technology that I could create that could actually solve this. I started having this existential crisis. I was making all this money, working for a shitty company that I realized I could not reform. I didn't even know if I liked software engineering because I hated my day-to-day job. I hated the fact that I didn't know what to do. I ended up joining the Democratic Socialists of America and found out about an income tax campaign. I started using my work time for the campaign. I really liked what I was doing, I was really getting the sense of my own power and the community's power to move elected officials. We were demanding things from them and getting them to say yes in uncomfortable ways.

When a paid organizing opportunity presented itself, I was offered really low pay, but I decided I'd saved enough money and might be able to leave. So part of it was how dissatisfied I was with work. Not to mention, my class analysis at the time was growing, realizing that my dysfunction with work was a normal thing.

What about you? What made you leave?

I was in the marketing department at a B2B big data company that made customer service software. It was my first job that

wasn't just scraping by as a freelancer. When I started out, there were still old cubicles and I was in the back! They were like, "I feel so bad that you're all alone back here!" But I loved it, honestly. I got all my work done. I'd deliver on my deliverables. Watch some Netflix sometimes when my boss was traveling for work.

That's bold as fuck!

It was great! I didn't know any better, but I was learning the way things worked. They'd say, "You're so fast!" and pile more work on me, and I quickly adjusted to managing up, spreading the work out.

Then, there were a lot of changes. 2012 was the dawn of the open office, and when we transitioned to ours, I was so upset. They hired another person to work with me. She was fresh out of college, went to a fancy private university, and had gone to a high-performing private high school. Really bright student, great grades. Except she was not prepared for the workforce! She was on her way to burnout. I did my best to prep her in the beginning. I said, "You know, you really want to pace yourself, because if you finish something early, they'll give you way more to do." I don't think she got it because she was like the Energizer bunny. She was overachieving and they piled more and more work on her, and it was doubly bad. She made me look incompetent. I'd been working at this even pace, and meanwhile she was blowing it out of the water. Suddenly we had to work twice as hard, and I really started resenting her for it.

I feel like a lot of people who go to prestigious colleges, who get the grades, there's some level of socialization that you fall into. Our education system socializes us to be good workers. You just want to do the same thing that got you into that top school. And that was me. I wanted to be the best in my field. I wanted to be a master engineer by the time I was 25. Like, I'm not! [laughs] To put it in perspective, I was hired as a senior

engineer right out of college. Why? I don't know. Schmoozed the right people, I guess. But Seattle was not an option for new grads, so I was the youngest person in the office. Everyone else had been working there for a while, and they were jaded as fuck. Everybody there was playing the game to do the minimum amount of work possible. And I was this overachiever motherfucker. I was this annoying kid.

You were my coworker!

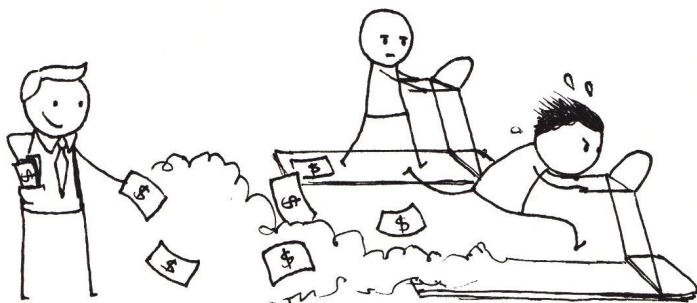
I was that person! I was like, "I have no work right now."

Walking around like, "Can you give me something to do?"

Yes.

No!

Someone should've sat me down and said, "Don't you realize how this works? You just need to shut the fuck up and go on a hike right now." These people had the best work-life balance ever. It was something most workers don't dream of. Yes there was blatant racism, yes there was sexism. But if you could ignore that, the work-life balance was phenomenal. But nobody wanted to admit it because we all had this productivity bullshit to cater to. So I was blowing the cover off this whole process, and people were pissed!



I am not a worker, I am a future CEO. Someone in the seat is better than no one in the seat. Management style is firm yet fair. The performance of this team is a direct reflection on my own worth as a manager. I can handle difficult situations with ease. I am the glue that holds this team together. I am developing my leadership skills. I am building my personal brand. I am not a worker, I am a future CEO. Management is an art. Sometimes you have to use a firm hand. My management style is firm yet fair. The performance of this team is a direct reflection on my own worth as a manager. I will embrace responsibility and challenge. I enjoy being a manager.

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 I Deserve My Success

 My Colleagues Respect

 My Boss Respects

 I Am Very Good at

 I Am Awesome at

 I Am Very Good at

 I Have a Firm and

 I Am Not a Blocker

 I Am OK

 Wisdom from the

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But the thing is, it's not that I looked down on people who weren't working. I realized that my career was going to be beyond this place. If I lazed around there I might be unemployable. So I had deep anxiety about my future hireability. This was a place where people end their careers, and I was just starting mine. But I thought I was the only one that didn't have work. Because everyone was pretending to be so productive that I thought I was a defective worker, a defective software engineer. I thought people weren't giving me work for a reason.

I think that's what happens at the start of someone's career. If they don't get prepped, they get beaten down by the workplace and have to learn the hard way. You don't realize why you feel so great about productivity. It's just, "I got this done faster." It's internalized Taylorism. At that company, my coworker got promoted and I didn't. But years later, I looked her up on LinkedIn and we have the exact same job now. I'm not saying it out of self-satisfaction. I just mean there's little reward in trying to overachieve in every aspect. You're just in a race against burnout. But of course, she didn't know that.

My boss was a Lean In feminist, she was literally reading Sheryl Sandberg, and tried to lend me the book. I think my she wanted to take me under her wing and make me her mentee. You know, it's all about women mentoring women. That's how we achieve equality is that we all become CEOs! I didn't respond to being a mentee or having that kind of mentor, so her project failed. After my coworker came on, the culture at work was more about schmoozing. My boss wanted to take us out more often. I really liked having work-life balance, so I'd say no to these invitations. But it's not great to say no because you look like the one with a bad attitude. She'd say, "You don't want to hang out with us today?" Like no, not when I already "hung out" with



you for all day long!

And you didn't want to read their shitty books!

Yeah, so many wasted hours! So I didn't have any freedom, I felt like I was being surveilled in the new office layout, everyone around me was micromanaging, and my work was getting more and more compressed. Because it was an international company, we'd have calls to Bangalore. I felt bad for both parties. We'd have calls at 6:30 and 7 in the morning. And they'd have to stay in the office to take our call until 9 at night. Management got more stressful and high stakes. I'd turn in something that met the expectations of the project, but not the expectations of my boss. One time she yelled at me and made me cry. It got so bad that I'd wake up in the morning like, "OK, I'm gonna count to 10 and then force myself to get up." And as I'd count, I'd wonder, "What the hell am I doing right now?"

Eventually, I decided to quit my job and donate my eggs. I'd done a lot of research before because egg donation is marketed really heavily toward young women. What are women graduating with student loans gonna do in this economy? We're gonna sell our eggs. I found out Asian eggs are really high in demand.

Are you serious? Why?

There are a lot of rich Asians in Hong Kong, Australia, China, Singapore who are willing to pay hella money for IVF. So they're looking for Asian donors, and there aren't a lot of Asian donors. It's a really shady industry, very opaque, and a lot of young women get taken advantage of. I had to provide my college transcripts and tell them a bunch of other details about me, like whether I was in any Gifted and Talented programs as a kid. I went in with eyes open. I knew it was exploitative, but I was like, "Well fuck, I already am exploited. Might as well quit my job, inject some hormones into my stomach, and run away to grad school." Two terrible options, but that was one



that I made. I wanted out.

I think leaving the industry, there's a part of me that wanted to try a new field, but now looking back at it, I'm like, "That was a cushy-ass job." But there's a part of me that's like "Should we really force ourselves to go to work and be miserable just because it pays?"

No way!

I realized that I couldn't identify with engineers that loved the technology for what it is. They don't care about what they're working on as long as they get to use it. Technology is cool, but I feel different from other software engineers I know who are like, "I wanna become the best in my field and become a master engineer, and write white papers, and work at Google, and find the next technology so I can shave microseconds off an API request!" Like, think if all the brilliance that had gone into facial recognition...

If it'd gone into something worthwhile?

There are amazing things you could do with that technology, like finding cancer tumors, but it's gone into making fucking Snapchat filters and giving people fucking doggy ears! And that fucking blows my mind. Some of these engineers work so hard in school, get their PhDs, and then go do the most meaningless bullshit. Work for Facebook, like what the fuck, y'all? There's beauty in humans making something so complex, but even if I worked at Facebook working on the coolest technology, I'm still working for a fucking social media company, an advertising company, that sells people's private data. But then people all go crazy, like, "The scale! The scale!" They're obsessed with that.

The company you worked at was a place that had customers, it had people. My company made software for other companies. It felt hella worthless to just make stuff for banks, stuff for airlines. A lot of the things we were marketing did not yet exist, but we were selling the product anyway. We'd film these product videos talking about how the software works, even though we weren't anywhere close to figuring it out.

That was my problem, and no offense meant here, but at my job, the marketing department pretty much ran everything. They'd regularly ask me to do something that was computationally not possible! And they'd try to bring in Scrum and Agile -- all these culturally appropriative things from Japanese workplaces into engineering culture -- just to create more output. At the end of the day, I realize it's marketing that sells the product, not the technology. All the people who love software engineering for what it is, those people get weeded out. I knew this guy. Sweetest guy ever. He'd been there since the founding of the company, like employee #3. He genuinely loved technology, and he was so smart. I was like, "Dude, we're making some trash." And he'd go, "Well, you know, we get to work on cool stuff." I don't think he realized marketing sold tech. So another employee ended up becoming a CEO, everybody else became CFOs, and meanwhile he was still an engineer, probably making a lower wage. That's when I realized about the bullshit

of this meritocracy. You can't move up just doing things you love.

Especially if you're in it for the love of tech, there's this patronizing attitude of, "Ohhh, but don't you love this? You don't need better conditions and better benefits. Just go play with your toys."

My manager was always asking me, "Do you have any side projects? Because all good engineers have side projects." And at the time I said, "I might have a side project. But if I make some app that makes the company millions of dollars, my salary's still gonna be the same, don't you think?" And she was just like, "Well yeah, but don't you love the technology?" Like yeah, I do, that's why I'm working on a project outside of work!

That's why I hated work hackathons. I hated them and everyone hated me for it. But I'm not gonna sleep over in this janky-ass smelly building, working on a project that I have no ownership of that will end up possibly making this company a lot of money, and I just get to have the same salary. They're like "You care about money so much man." I just value my labor!

Yeah, all the strategies I've learned are more about protecting myself and my time than they are about advancing my career. Now I know more about agitation than anything else. But I learned a lot about the industry and about product marketing, and a history of working in tech has gotten my foot in the door for other jobs, for sure. I didn't know how to play the game then. I'm still not sure if I would still know how to play the game if I ever went back.

One time my manager was being real with me. She said, "It's bullshit, but at the end of the day this is bullshit that's gonna get you up higher."

Do you think if you went back you'd be able to play the game?

I think I'd be able to play it way better if I went back. But like you said, I'd want to organize. 18

AN ODE TO THE MODERN OFFICE

By Luitpold

We are not like other offices

We have craft beer on tap

We are not like other offices

Our non technical roles pay like crap

We are not like other offices

We require a college degree

We are not like other offices

Enjoy doing data entry

We are not like other offices

We offer opportunities for growth

We are not like other offices

Here's another job, have fun doing both

We are not like other offices

Look at our office design

We are not like other offices

faux industrial and exposed beams are so fine

We are not like other offices

We know you will like it here

We are not like other offices

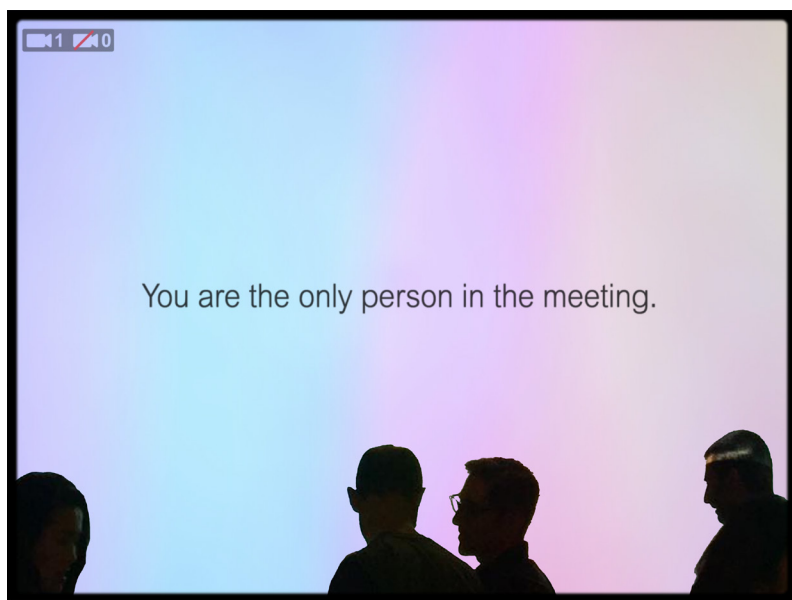
What do you have to fear?

Remote

By Spruce Lee

8:43am. Monday. The guy at the co-working space whose name I keep forgetting looks up as I walk in, then looks back down at his laptop. I'm sweaty from my bike ride. I sign in on the tablet by the door and head upstairs. No one's taken my usual desk. I unload my backpack: a hefty 17" laptop, power brick, keyboard, mouse, usb headset. There are two emails in my inbox from an analyst and a software developer on the east coast. Someone asked me a question on Slack three hours ago. Already I'm behind.

9:00am. Standup. All 40 staff, all remote workers, are on the call. The managers give updates on projects I can't keep straight. The company owners hate video calls, so we do audio-only meetings except for screen sharing. An analyst gives a demo of a feature I worked on. Only one hiccup, so only a few snide comments. After we get through the agenda, there's a few minutes for virtual "water cooler." Someone talks about a charity bike ride they're training for. It's met with the silence of 40 muted headsets.



Is it weird that most of the company I work for has never met in person? The staff, spread out over the whole country, is a web of nepotism, clusters of people who've worked together at other companies. One of the owners and I worked together before as devs. That's how I landed this contract gig a year ago. It's worked out: being remote allowed me to move back to Seattle, after almost a decade away. My previous studio in Capitol Hill now costs over twice as much. I live further south now.

10:45am. I finish some code, do a quick call with another dev. This is his first remote job, and I can tell he's struggling with the isolation and strangeness of the online interactions, though he doesn't engage when I ask him how things are going. Calls with everyone are always short and to the point; there's rarely any real talk.

I'm always self-conscious about whether my volume bothers others in the co-working space. But I know I'm nowhere as bad as the lawyer who comes in twice a week and makes loud calls to government offices to discuss the confidential details of his clients' cases.

Today there's a new face a few desks away, who's introducing herself to coworkers on her headset. "In my spare time, I love to go hiking!" You and everyone else in this town, lady. The co-working space is full of entrepreneurs. One of them is yelling at a recent hire, a young college student, for not following a certain procedure exactly. She looks like she might cry. She won't be back next week.

11:00am. Weekly dev meeting. The agenda is always the same: the architect doles out gentle and harsh reminders of the "best practices" we're all constantly failing to follow. Individuals are seldom singled out, but still, it always feels punitive rather than a genuine attempt at improving our collective work. It doesn't feel possible to ever do a great job, only an adequate one. This is the reality of an enormous codebase with a lot of complexity and legacy pieces.

11:55am. I hastily make some commits before lunch, put comments in the project management software, log the time I spent on it. Time logged is measured against estimates, which we decide upon as a group during excruciating meetings where we argue over how complex and difficult a chunk of work is. This is "consensus," we're told, but it's usually a shouting match. Your velocity is your actual time compared to estimated time. One time I looked at the project management screen showing this number and saw my velocity was below the team average. I chose never to look at that screen again.

1:04pm. I get a request to merge some code into tomorrow morning's release. I ask someone on the QA team to test the branch where I resolved a bunch of mysterious conflicts. She lives in the midwest, raises goats, and often sighs during our calls. We bond over our shared fear of one of the company owners, who has a bad temper and little patience. Of all the people I've never met, I like her the best.

I start a Slack conversation with one of the ops people. I've been dreading this. The team members in ops get along well with one another but are hostile to everyone else. Every discussion seems to devolve into how other people aren't precise enough in what they're asking for. I reference an email I sent last week. The ops dude points out it wasn't precise enough.

2:43pm. In the corner of the co-working space are two software developers who have their own company. They never make eye contact or interact with anyone besides each other. Today they are loudly debating the best way to tweak an algorithm they're working on. One of them says "the value add." I put on my headphones.

There are many devs in the co-working space, lots of former Amazon employees. They're generally cut from the same cloth: highly career-focused, prickly yet strangely empty of affect, somewhat boring to talk to. Shop talk mostly devolves into one-upmanship. You can only talk about good restaurants so much, and I don't eat out that often anyway. I gave up on trying to make friends with other devs a long time ago.

4:00pm. One-on-one meeting with my supervisor, a brilliant programmer who's one of the authors of a major open source library we use. He's the type that gets hyped about productivity: everything is either about increasing or decreasing it. He works a lot. During the day, he's locked away in his home office. "Work is my refuge from the wife and kids." He's only half joking.

4:30pm. Brain dead. I call it a day. I usually fall short of logging a full 40 hours a week. I get my work done, so the company doesn't care; they're happy, in fact, given my relatively low rate. In another situation, I might pad my hours, but I don't feel good doing that here, so I don't. It's bad for my finances, but I can't do anymore today. I have nothing left in the gas tank. This happens a lot.

Dinner tonight with a friend I've known close to 20 years. Since I moved back here, I've made few new friends; most people I've met are casual acquaintances from the gym and other activities. Making friends takes time, but it doesn't help that I don't have a workplace and coworkers to

help settle in. I need to find something else to do for work, something with a more concrete existence in the world.

I decide to walk home before going to dinner. I love walking over the Jose Rizal bridge into Beacon Hill, gazing out at the city skyline and the mountains on the horizon. I love that the I-90 freeway starts here and runs all the way to the other coast. The beauty of this place is one of the reasons I moved back here. I just wish it didn't feel so remote.

The editors of Bug Report! would like to thank
all the Seattle workers organizing in the industry
and the many folks who contributed
their stories and experiences to this zine

WRITE US! bugreportzine@protonmail.com
Stalk us on Instagram: [@bugreportzine](https://www.instagram.com/bugreportzine)